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AUTHOR Hughey, Jim D.
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ABSTRACT

A study examined the extent of the role communication encounters play in helping people make accurate predictions about others, and what types of communicators (in terms of communicative reponsiveness and gender) seem to profit most from interaction with the subject of prediction prior to making predictions. Subjects, 118 college students, completed an inventory that categorized each student as Mastery Responsive (opts to influence others), Flexible Responsive (adapts with conversation), or Neutral Responsive (detaches from the conversation). Each then made predictions about other students enrolled in the same course. The predictions were made either after an encounter with the subject of prediction, or without such an encounter. Data analysis showed significant, but not large, gains in predictive accuracy following a communication encounter. Neutral Responsives gained the most from the encounters. Females did a better job of predicting in same-sex dyads, and males gained most in mixed-sex ones. The results can be interpreted in terms of a task/maintenance/likeness-bias theory of interpersonal sensitivity, which would account for the low-to-moderate and somewhat bizarre relationships reported in the sensitivity/communication literature. (FL)

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ABSTRACT

INTERPERSONAL SENSITIVITY, COMMUNICATION ENCOUNTERS, COMMUNICATIVE RESPONSIVENESS, AND GENDER

by

Jim D. Hughey

This paper offers empirical support for the contention that interpersonal sensitivity is related to communication and gender variables. Significant but not large effects were noted on two measures of predictive accuracy when respondents engaged in a communication encounter prior to making predictions. Neutral Responsive communicators gained the most from the encounter; females did a better job of predicting in same-sex dyads, and males gained the most in mixed-sex dyads. The results are interpreted in terms of a task/maintenance/likeness-bias theory of interpersonal sensitivity. It is contended that this theory accounts for the low-to-moderate and somewhat bizarre relationships reported in the sensitivity/communication literature.

Jim D. Hughey is a Professor of Speech Communication at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 405-624-6150.

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INTERPERSONAL SENSITIVITY, COMMUNICATION ENCOUNTERS,
COMMUNICATIVE RESPONSIVENESS, AND GENDER

Henry Clay Smith (1966) asserts that sensitivity to others is manifested in the accuracy of the predictions we make about others. Communication encounters play a central role in Smith's model of interpersonal sensitivity. The predictor's interactions with the predictee, along with the predictor's judging habits and knowledge of the other person, form the basis of predictive accuracy.

Previous attempts to study the communication component of the model have focused on the communication patterns of the predictor and predictee rather than the communication encounter, per se. Ronald Smith (1967) found no significant relationship between patterns of communication and predictive accuracy in an industrial setting. Larsen (1965), Mix (197), Ross (1973), and Northouse (1977) found instances where both high-threat and high-trust patterns of communication enhance predictive accuracy when areas of difference are the target of prediction. Hill and Courtright (1981) reported a low-order relationship between trust and predictive accuracy ($r = .15$). Hughey and Lyzenga (1983) found correlations ranging from .29 to .63 between communication responsiveness and predictive accuracy in same-sex dyads. At best, when a significant relationship has been reported, it has been a low to moderate one.

These studies do not address the fundamental issue of how much of a role that the communication encounter, itself, plays in interpersonal sensitivity. Until this issue is resolved, we are in a quandary about

the interpretation of the low to moderate relationships reported in the sensitivity literature. Are these low to moderate relationships between communication patterns and predictive accuracy indicative of a flaw in research methodology? All of the studies have dealt with measures of accuracy for a single target of prediction. They have not estimated a person's general level of accuracy for multiple targets of prediction. From the amount of space devoted to empathy and related concepts in our communication literature, we would deduce that, theoretically, there is a "large" relationship between sensitivity and communication. But at the empirical level, we have been able to demonstrate a rather "smallish" relationship.

Furthermore, it would be helpful to know what kinds of communicators profit most from having the opportunity to engage in a communication encounter prior to making predictions. We might expect the interpersonally competent to have the decided advantage over the less responsive communicator. However, some of the research findings point in the opposite direction. Hughey and Lyzenga (1983) found instances where the nonjudging, supportive communicator was out-distanced by the nontalking, nonintervening communicator. Northouse (1977) suggests that low trust may promote predictive accuracy. Being able to compare a person's post-communication accuracy with his/her general level of accuracy may aid in the interpretation of previous findings.

Do males or females profit the most from a communication encounter prior to making predictions? Do same-sex or mixed-sex combinations perform equally well? The role of gender in making predictions has been studied extensively (Allport, 1924; Fernberger, 1928; Guilford, 1929; Kanner, 1931; Jenness, 1932; Vinacke, 1949; Levy 1964; Feshback & Roe, 1968). However, no clear pattern of predictive superiority has emerged for either gender.

And none of the studies examined post-communication accuracy in relation to a person's general level of accuracy. Some of the current research on linguistic differences between the genders in same-sex and mixed-sex dyads offer some intriguing clues as to who might profit most from a communication encounter prior to making predictions (Lakoff, 1973; Haas, 1979; Martin & Craig, 1983). Martin and Craig (1983) found male dyads and mixed-sex dyads followed the expected pattern when getting acquainted--high reciprocity with equal input from each partner. However, female-female dyads departed from the expected pattern: one person always dominated the conversation which led to the low reciprocity that is usually associated with more intimate relationships. They suggest that women may "feel more comfortable in initial interactions with other women than with men" (p. 26). One might expect female predictors to profit more from a communication encounter with other females than from one with males.

In sum, this paper addresses two questions: (1) How much of a role does a communication encounter play in making accurate predictions about others? (2) What types of communicators (in terms of communicative responsiveness and gender) seem to profit most from interaction with the predictee prior to making predictions? The answers are based on the investigation of 118 individuals enrolled in a basic interpersonal communication course. After responding to an inventory designed to estimate their communicative responsiveness in conversations, both male and female respondents made a series of predictions about other members enrolled in the course. The predictions were made under two conditions. In condition one, predictors made predictions following a communication encounter where the respondent was instructed to get to know the other person as well as possible during a 75 minute session. In condition two, predictors made

predictions about others in the class without the benefit of the communication encounter. Condition two represented an estimate of a person's general level of predictive accuracy. A repeated measure MANOVA design was used to analyze the data. The remainder of this paper details the procedures used in the study and the results of the study.

Measures of Interpersonal Sensitivity

Early researchers referred to interpersonal sensitivity in a variety of ways, including "insight" (Green, 1948; Gage & Exline, 1952-53; Norman, 1953). Bronfenbrenner, Harding and Gallwey (1958) defined predictive skill as "the ability to forecast actions and psychological states that are not being directly observed" (p. 97). They concluded that predictive skill is one of the central factors in social perception. Later researchers reaffirmed this conclusion in their study of person perception and interpersonal perception (Hastorf, Schneider & Polefka, 1970).

The early sensitivity researchers have been criticized for using predictive measures that confounded predictor-predictee similarities with predictor accuracy (Gomertz, 1960; Hobart & Fahlberg, 1965). For example, Dymond's measurement methodology (1948, 1950) was taken to task by Hastorf and Bender (1952). They demonstrated that the forecast of Dymond's predictor was related more to the predictor's own response system than to the target's response system, which smacks more of projection than empathy.

The early sensitivity research involved people who actually engaged in communication prior to making predictions as well as photographs, written profiles, and the like as the targets of prediction (Dymond, 1948, 1950; Cottrell & Dymond, 1949; Fiske, 1951; Cline, 1955; Cline & Richards,

1960). In spite of methodological problems and variations, the profile of the sensitive person constructed from the results of these studies is of interest to the communicologist. Chance and Meaders (1960) describe the interpersonally sensitive as "a person who is active and outgoing in social relationships, who likes other people but is not markedly dependent upon them, who is ascendant but not hostile and competitive, and who is not given to intellectual reflection about his interpersonal relationships. The picture is one of an individual who finds significant satisfactions in social activities and carries on his daily life with a minimum of interpersonal or intrapersonal conflict" (pp. 204-205). The profile is remarkably similar to that of the interpersonally competent communicator (Bochner & Kelly, 1974).

In an effort to avoid the pitfalls encountered by the early sensitivity researchers, most communication researchers have used the Empathy Ratio Score (ERS) as the measure of interpersonal sensitivity. The work of Hobart and Fahlberg (1965) suggests it is the appropriate measure of predictive accuracy for people who have a significant history of interacting with each other. The ERS is defined as the number of correct predictions a person makes of his/her partner's dissimilar responses divided by the number of statements on which the predictor and his/her partner have dissimilar responses.

However, the work of Hughey and Lyzenga (1983) suggests that communication studies should also include an estimate of the accurate prediction of similarities. They reason that the commonalities achieved between respondents through communication is lost when the ERS is used as the sole measure of accuracy. Hobart and Fahlberg (1965) propose the Compounded Ratio Score (CRS) as a measure that addresses appropriately the issue of

commonality. The CRS is defined as the number of correct predictions a person makes of his/her partner's similar responses divided by the number of statements on which the predictor and his/her partner have similar responses.

Both the ERS and CRS were used as dependent variables in this study. Hobart and Fahlberg (1965) addressed the issue of the validity of the two indices by correlating them with a variety of other methods of measuring accuracy. They report correlations of .74 for the ERS and the measurement used by Hastorf and Bender (1952) and .58 for the CRS and the measurement used by Dymond (1948, 1950). They argue that the reduction in error for the ERS and CRS accounts for the moderate degrees of relationship. We have studied the reliability of the indices with a 15-item version of the prediction instrument, the Study of Values, used in this study (Allport, Vernon & Lindzey, 19). With n = 584, alpha was .77 for the ERS and .79 for the CRS.

The Measure of Communicative Responsiveness

The communication responsiveness of the student was measured by a forty-item version of Conversation Self Report Inventory (CSRI). Work with the CSRI has suggested that individual patterns of communication can be differentiated in terms of six major aspects: (1) the way the person views the purpose of communication, (2) the communicative climate he/she creates, (3) the way he/she transmits information, (4) the way he/she receives information, (5) the way he/she sequences messages, and (6) the way he/she copes with communication barriers. Three modes of responsiveness are tapped by the CSRI: the Mastery mode, the Flexibile mode, and the Neutral mode.

With the Mastery Responsive (MR) mode, a person chooses to impose his/her will on the conversation. The person opts to influence others, to generate a competitive climate, and to speak in a verbal-dynamic way. Listening is restricted to that information that will help him/her formulate responses and rebuttals that advance his/her views. The person achieves coherence by getting others to adopt his/her way of organizing messages. The person handles problems in conversations once they come to a head but does little to prevent problematic situations from occurring.

For the Flexible Responsive (FR) mode, a person chooses to respond by adapting or harmonizing him/herself with the conversation. The communicator focuses on understanding others, generating a supportive climate, speaking in an adaptive way with an emphasis on nonverbal output, and listening to anything a person has to say. The person adapts to the organizational patterns of others and is a problem preventor.

With the Neutral Responsive (NR) mode, a person chooses to detach him/herself from the conversation. This person appears to be aimless and uninvolved in conversations. The person seldom speaks, listens to very little, fails to follow the drift of the conversation, and avoids coping with problems that arise in conversations.

The specific blocks of items used to represent the Mastery and Flexible modes of responsiveness in this study were based on ideas expounded by Rogers and Roethlisberger (1952) several years ago. They asserted that two common patterns of communication have quite different aims. What we call the "Mastery" pattern is oriented toward producing commitment in communicative encounters. Communicators with this orientation believe communication "has failed when B does not accept what A has to say as being fact, true, or valid; and the goal of communication is to get B to agree to A's opinions, ideas, facts, or information" (pp. 46-52). What

we call the "Flexible" pattern is oriented toward producing satisfaction in communicative encounters. Communicators with this orientation believe "Communication has failed when B does not feel free to express his feelings to A because B fears they will not be accepted by A. Communication is facilitated when on the part of A or B or both there is a willingness to express and accept differences" (pp. 46-52).

Although Rogers and Roethlisberger did not discuss the "Neutral" pattern, our communication literature points to the third mode of responding with great frequency (McCroskey, 1977; McCroskey & Richmond, 1983; Kelly, 1982). What we call the "Neutral" pattern is oriented toward the avoidance of problems in communication. Communicators with this orientation tend to be quiet and uncommunicative, want to avoid unpleasantness, and become somewhat anxious, tense, and uncomfortable in conversational situations.

Neal and Hughey (1979) summarize the early validation studies of the CSRI. The inventory correlates with the expected dimensions tapped by the "California Psychological Inventory" and Gordon's "Survey of Interpersonal Values." The Flexible Responsive Scale produces correlations in the .46 - .38 (n = 89) range for the Sociability, Benevolence, Tolerance, and Good Impression scales of these measures. Other significant relationships were noted between the CSRI and the Social Presence, Responsibility, Achievement, Intellectual Efficiency, and Femininity scales. Leesavan (1977) summarizes other validation studies where scales on the CSRI were related significantly to communication satisfaction, management style, decision-making effectiveness, and violence proneness. Recent studies have related the CSRI to teaching effectiveness and found the scales to successfully differentiate among teaching styles and course outcomes (Hughey & Harper, 1983). Reliability coefficients for the various

scales are typically in the .70 to .85 range. In a recent study (n = 584), alpha was .66 for the Mastery Responsive scale, .80 for the Flexible Responsive scale, and .73 for the Neutral Responsive scale.

The mapping of conversational patterns uses a technique that was employed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) in their study of value orientations. Communication patterns are conceived to be the ranking possibilities of the MR, FR, and NR options:

MR/FR/NR	MR/NR/FR
FR/MR/NR	FR/NR/MR
NR/MR/FR	NR/FR/MR

The Experimental Conditions

In order to estimate the impact of communication on predictive accuracy, two sets of predictions were made by each of the 118 respondents involved in the study. The first set was designated as condition one: the predictions were made following a communication encounter. The second set was designated as condition two: the predictions were made about other class members without the benefit of a communication encounter. Condition two represented an estimate of the respondent's general level of predictive accuracy.

In condition one, students who did not know each other well were paired together and asked to get to know each other as well as possible. The students were enrolled in Processes of Speech Communication at Oklahoma State University. About halfway through the course, students were asked to list the five people in the class they knew very well and the five people they knew least well. Dyads were formed from the least-known listings. Each member of each dyad had indicated that the other member

was unknown to him/her. Because the first half of the course dealt with out-of-class projects with individuals not enrolled in the class, it was not difficult to form dyads composed of individuals who were relatively unknown to each other. The only restriction in forming the dyads was the acquaintanceship requirement. The composition of the dyads in terms of gender was determined by a table of random numbers. One 75 minute class period was set aside for the get-acquainted session. No restrictions were placed on continued out-of-class transactions. It was felt that an individual's decision to either continue or not continue transactions was reflective of his/her communication responsiveness. Thus outside of class transactions were neither encouraged nor discouraged.

In condition two, the respondents were asked to list at least two other class members who they felt they knew well enough to make predictions about. In this case, the acquaintanceship requirement was not imposed.

Respondents were then asked to respond to the first thirty items of the Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Study of Values (1960a). They responded first in terms of their own value preferences and then in terms of how they believed the persons they interviewed in condition one and the persons they listed in condition two would respond. Numerous studies have established the validity and reliability of the Study of Values (Allport, Vernon & Lindzey, 1960b). This widely-used paper and pencil instrument measures the relative strength of six motives in the human personality system: the aesthetic, theoretical, political, religious, economic, and social motives. The ERS and CRS were calculated for each respondent and his/her predictees. The ERS and CRS under condition one and the average of the ERS and CRS under condition two resulted in two ERS measures and two CRS measures for each of the 118 respondents.

The Research Design and Statistical Methods

A 3 x 2 x 2 x 2 MANOVA design (with repeated measures) was employed. Three levels of communicative responsiveness constituted the first independent variable. Those respondents with a first-choice Neutral-Responsive component in their communication pattern were designated as level one; those with a first order Flexible-Responsive component became level two; and those with a dominant Mastery component constituted the third level.

The next two variables were sex-linked variables: the first designating the sex of the predictor and the second indicating if the predictee was same-sex or opposite sex.

The last factor represented the communication-encounter (condition one) and the general level of accuracy (condition two) conditions. This factor was considered as a repeated measurement for the purposes of analysis.

The two dependent variables were the ERS and CRS measures that were described earlier.

The SPSS MANOVA (Repeated Measures) program was used in the analysis of the data (Hull & Nie, 1981). A series of contrasts (deviation) were planned for studying the variations associated with the independent variables.

The Findings

The following convention has been used to facilitate the communication of the results of the study. The ERS and CRS are reported so that the range of scores is 0-100. A score of 40 for the ERS means that the

predictor got 40% of the predictions correct when the predictor's own value preference differed from those of the predictee. A score of 40 for the CRS means that the predictor got 40% of the predictions correct when the predictor's own value preferences were the same as the predictee.

Clearly, the predictors in this study found the prediction of similarities to be an easier task than the prediction of differences. For the total sample, including both conditions one and two, the average Compounded Ratio Score was 74.40 (S.D. = 12.34); the average Empathy Ratio Score was 44.40 (S.D. = 16.56).

(1) How much of a role does a communication encounter play in making accurate predictions about others?

It was found that having a communication encounter prior to making predictions enhances predictive accuracy. However, the size of the effect seems to belong to the "small effects" category rather than the "large effects" category. Table 1 displays the means for each experimental condition.

Table 1 about here

The multivariate tests were significant. The canonical correlation between conditions and the measures of predictive accuracy was .43 (Lambda = .82, $F[2,105] = 11.73$, $p < .000$). The Roy-Bargman Stepdown F-tests indicated both the ERS and CRS made significant contributions to the relationship (ERS, $F[1,106] = 11.80$, $p = .001$; CRS, $F[1,105] = 10.60$, $p = .003$). In this study, only 18% of the variance was explained by the conditions factor.

(2) What types of communicators (in terms of communicative responsiveness and gender) seem to profit most from communication prior to making predictions?

A. The Impact of Communicative Responsiveness

Overall, the communicative responsiveness of the predictor had more of an impact on the accurate prediction of differences than on the prediction of similarities. More specifically, the Neutral Responsive communicator gained more in terms of the ERS than either the Flexible and Mastery Responsive communicators. And both Neutral and Mastery Responsive communicators gained more in terms of the CRS than the Flexible Responsive communicator. Table 2 displays the means for each type of communicator.

Table 2 about here

The multivariate tests were not significant. The canonical correlation between the communication responsiveness factor and the measures of predictive accuracy for condition one was .26 for root no. 1 (Lambda = .92, $F[4,210] = 2.13$, $p = .08$) and .08 for root no. 2 (Lambda = .99, $F[1,105] = 0.76$, $p = .39$). The Roy-Bargman Stepdown F-tests indicated that the ERS made a significant contribution to the relationship ($F[2,106] = 3.91$, $p = .02$), but the CRS did not ($F[2,105] = 0.44$, $p = .65$). Furthermore it was found that the Neutral Responsive communicator achieved higher predictive accuracy scores (ERS) than either of the other communicators ($t = 2.78$, $p = .006$). None of the contrasts was significant for the CRS under condition one.

However, communicative responsiveness was related to the CRS in one instance. One of the contrasts revealed that both Neutral and Mastery Responsive communicators exceed their general accuracy level when predicting after a communication encounter, whereas the Flexible Responsive communicator does not exceed his/her general level ($t = 2.13$, $p = .036$).

B. The Impact of Gender

No simple, main effects were noted for the gender variables (gender of the predictor and gender combination formed for the communication encounter). However, significant interaction effects were noted for the prediction of similarity. When predicting for areas of similarity (CRS), males register the greatest gains in accuracy in mixed-sex dyads, and females register the greatest gains in same-sex dyads. Table 3 displays the means for the gender factors.

Table 3 about here

The multivariate tests were significant for the dyad gender-combination by gender and condition interaction. The canonical correlation was .27 (Lambda = .93, $F[2,105] = 4.22$, $p = .017$). The Roy-Bargman Stepdown F-tests indicated that only the CRS made a significant contribution to the relationship (ERS, $F[1,106] = 2.45$, $p = .12$; CRS, $F[1,105] = 5.87$, $p = .017$).

Interpretations and Conclusions

It is comforting to be able to report that a communication encounter enhances predictive accuracy under the circumstances described in this study. But the size of the gain is analogous to Susan Student raising her grade point average from a solid C to a B-. Although we as instructors and parents would take pride in Susan's accomplishment, it would not be enough to get her on the President's Honor Roll.

When compared with an estimate of a person's general level of accuracy, accuracy improves significantly following communication; however, the amount of variance attributable to a communication encounter is not great. The communication encounter accounted for 18% of the variance in the accuracy measures. We would contend that the low to moderate relationships reported in previous studies of communication and interpersonal sensitivity reflect appropriately the way that these variables behave in naturalistic settings. We believe the findings are accurate estimates for the macro level of analysis.

Overall, this study found the most substantial gains in predictive accuracy were registered by the Neutral Responsives following a communication encounter. We were not surprised to find the Neutral Responsive communicator gaining the most from a communication encounter. It not only confirms the findings of a previous study using a different population but helps to clarify our understanding of the role of responsiveness in predictive accuracy.

We offer two lines of thought that converge to explain the results of this study and other studies we have conducted. The first is based on a task/maintenance idea derived from Bales (1950). The second is derived from the early sensitivity research that confounded predictor-

predictee similarity with predictive accuracy.

First, we believe that the significant gains by the Neutral Responsive communicator is supported by a task/maintenance explanation (Bales, 1950) of the results. In condition one, the communicators were given the task of getting to know each other as well as possible. As tasks go, we would assert that the task of getting to know another person involves a complex set of skills requiring a considerable investment of energy. If we assume that each person only has a given amount of energy that can be divided up in one or more ways, who is most likely to have the most energy to devote to the task? We would assert it is the Neutral Responsive communicator.

The Flexible Responsive communicators aim at producing satisfaction in a conversation; they are very concerned about the maintenance of a positive climate in the encounter. They self-report they are thoughtful, eager to listen, open-minded, and work to find common ground. We believe that Flexible Responsive communicators may devote more energy to maintenance than to task.

The Mastery Responsive communicators are quite assertive and aim at getting others to accept their views. In terms of Bales' model (1950), they may even foster a negative social-emotional climate. They make the uncritical assumption that they are usually understood by others, seldom act illogically, and avoid misunderstanding by presenting ideas in an organized way. We believe that the Mastery Responsive communicators may devote more energy to achieving their own goals than to the task of getting acquainted.

The Neutral Responsive communicators are certainly not overly concerned with maintenance operations. They do not give encouragement to the other person, avoid problematic situations by becoming quiet and uncommunicative,

and find it difficult to disagree with others. They are also filled with nervous energy and tense. Certainly the Neutral Responsive communicators are not what we normally associate with interpersonal competence. But we would submit that it is their lack of preoccupation with the maintenance of the interpersonal relationship that allows them to devote full energy to the task at hand.

It is interesting to note that the Neutral Responsive communicators are above the mean in their general accuracy level for the Empathy Ratio Score and exceed both the Flexible and Mastery communicators in the ability to predict differences following a communication encounter. To us, this indicates that the effectiveness of the Neutral mode is not dependent upon being instructed to get acquainted with another person in a classroom setting.

Another line of thought that helps in interpreting the results has to do with the profile of the sensitive person that emerged from the early research that confounded similarities with accuracy. The profile is remarkably similar to that of the Flexible Responsive. We believe that the positive maintenance orientation of the Flexible Responsives may work to obscure differences that exist between themselves and their predictees. Their propensity "to find the expectations of the other and point to areas of common agreement" may create in their minds an overestimate of the amount of commonality that actually exists between them and their predictees. We believe the over-perception of similarities is pervasive and not limited to the acquaintanceship process.

We believe that this likeness bias of the Flexible Responsives explains in part why they exhibited nonsignificant gains in the prediction of differences. They are promoting commonalities and may overlook

significant differences.

Their general CRS accuracy level is higher than that of Neutral and Mastery communicators. And the significant gains experienced by the Neutral and Mastery Responsives in the prediction of similarities only brought these communicators up to the general accuracy level of the Flexible Responsives.

The general accuracy level for Flexible communicators is virtually identical to their post communication scores for the CRS. We think this is indicative of a likeness bias that is characteristic of their day-to-day relationships.

If our interpretations are correct, we can better understand why Northouse (1977) could find low trust communicators better at predicting differences than high trust communicators. To the extent that the low-truster represents a low-maintenance orientation, we would expect him/her to have more energy to devote to the prediction of difference than the high-truster. However, we would expect this advantage to disappear for the prediction of similarities when the presumed likeness bias of the Flexible Responsive communicator comes into play. Although Northouse (1977) did not use the CRS in his study, Hughey and Lyzenga (1983) did. They found a trust-gaining orientation to facilitate (significantly) the prediction of similarities. Although nonsignificant, correlations for the trust-gainer and the ERS were negative (in the direction found by Northouse).

Who profits the most from a communication encounter? We believe that, when the question is framed in this manner, it makes a certain amount of intuitive sense to say, "The Neutral Responsive communicator." This quiet, uncommunicative person may be in the best position to "take

it all in" while others are "showing their stuff." But when it comes to the prediction of similarities, the communication encounter only serves to bring them up to the Flexible Responsive's general level of accuracy.

The finding that gender plays a role in making accurate predictions when both the sex of the predictor and predictee are taken into account may help explain the mixed results of the early sensitivity studies that dealt exclusively with the sex of the predictor. We found that neither males nor females exceed the other in predictive accuracy. But when the gender combination of the dyad is considered, females make more accurate predictions in same-sex dyads and males make more accurate prediction in mixed-sex dyads. The phenomenon is most clearly demonstrated in the prediction of similarities.

In discussing same sex-dyads, Rawlins (1983) uses the term "sociability" to typify male-male relationships and "intimacy" to typify female-female relationships. In essence males tend to disclose less intimate information to other males and tend to project an image of strength to other males (Jourard, 1971; Komarovsky, 1974; Pleck, 1975). On the other hand, Hirschman (1974) suggests that females may be able to converse more easily with other females than with males. Martin and Craig (1983) found "that women are less guarded, more relaxed when speaking to other women they don't know than men are with other women or men they don't know" (p. 26). Other research has suggested female-female relationships involve high interaction (Rands & Levinger, 1979) and more personalized communication (Knapp, Ellis & Williams, 1980).

We believe that our findings are in line with these more recent studies. Given that females are more comfortable with other females in communication encounters and share more personal information, we would

expect enhanced accuracy in the female-female dyad. To the extent that males withold personal information in encounters with other males, we would expect males to do less well in same-sex dyads than mixed-sex dyads.

In conclusion, we believe it is time to begin investigating the sensitivity-communication connection at the micro-level. As indicated at the beginning of this paper, Smith's model of sensitivity (1966) has three central components: the predictor's interaction with the predictee along with the predictor's judging habits and knowledge of the predictee. In a laboratory setting, it is possible to create situations where each of the three components is varied systematically. We can determine exactly what and how much of it goes into an accurate prediction. Although we lacked the foresight to systematically vary each of the components in this study, we were able to arrive at a rough estimate of what might happen if the knowledge variable were held constant across conditions while varying the communication encounter. The amount of variance associated with the encounter increases from 18 to 25%. Although still not large, the variance approaches a "modest" level.

The laboratory setting will enable us to test with precision the task/maintenance/likeness-bias theory we have spun to explain "who profits most from communication encounters?" Although our field seems preoccupied with isolating and eliminating the effects of "undesirable patterns" like shyness and reticence, it may be that these neutral patterns can actually teach us a thing or two about predictive empathy. We must pursue the possibility with a great deal more rigor than is possible in a field study.

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Table 1. Means for the communication-encounter condition and general-level-of-accuracy condition (n=118)

Condition One: Communication Encounter		Condition Two: General Level of Accuracy	
ERS	CRS	ERS	CRS
47.98	76.12	40.82	72.69

Table 2. Means for the Neutral Responsive, Flexible Responsive, and Mastery Responsive communicators (n=118)

	Neutral Responsive		Flexible Responsive		Mastery Responsive	
	ERS	CRS	ERS	CRS	ERS	CRS
Condition 1	54.72 (n=32)	74.19 (n=32)	44.33 (n=43)	74.81 (n=43)	46.63 (n=43)	78.86 (n=43)
Condition 2	44.91 (n=32)	69.28 (n=32)	39.60 (n=43)	74.72 (n=43)	39.00 (n=43)	73.19 (n=43)

Table 3. Means for the male-female and same-sex, mixed-sex communicators (n=118)

	Male		Female	
	Same Sex Dyad	Mixed Sex Dyad	Same Sex Dyad	Mixed Sex Dyad
ERS				
Condition 1	45.29 (n=44)	53.88 (n=29)	45.72 (n=18)	47.00 (n=27)
Condition 2	40.62 (n=44)	38.58 (n=29)	40.68 (n=18)	44.11 (n=27)
CRS				
Condition 1	73.38 (n=44)	81.26 (n=29)	80.15 (n=18)	73.74 (n=27)
Condition 2	72.41 (n=44)	72.61 (n=29)	73.13 (n=18)	72.63 (n=27)